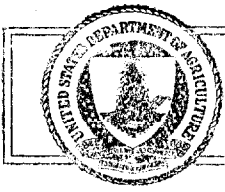
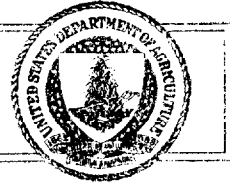


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CROW PROBLEMS AND POLICIES ARE LOCAL

Unbiased pronouncements of the Department of Agriculture on the crow problem have been interpreted in some quarters by opponents of the crow as demanding that the bird be protected. Such an interpretation, however, is not warranted by anything that the department has published on the subject, say officials of the Bureau of Biological Survey. Champions of special interests, they say, sometimes forget that an organization like the Department of Agriculture must take into consideration all aspects of a given problem, and that it must advocate the policy that seems best for all concerned. In its application to the crow situation, this is well illustrated by recent recommendations of sporting magazines that general campaigns be undertaken against the crow because of its alleged destructiveness to the young and eggs of game birds.

That the crow does harm, that it is a species well able to take care of itself, and that its local control often is advisable are facts very generally recognized. Approval by the department of local control measures, however, does not carry with it approval of country-wide extermination campaigns or of intensively organized local drives against this bird. Biologists assert that such forms of control as side hunts have been known to do more harm than good, since they frequently result in the destruction of innocent birds of many other species.

The views of the Department of Agriculture on the food habits of the crow were arrived at after a study continuing over many years and were based not only upon field observations and testimony but also upon the laboratory examinations of more than 2,100 stomachs. The following summary of the attitude of the department is made from a bulletin on the crow, which presents the results of investigations and not only states in an unbiased way both the harm and the good done by the crow but outlines a policy regarding this bird that the findings seem to justify.

The bulletin states that the crow, when feeding on injurious insects, crustaceans, rodents, and carrion, and when dispersing seeds of beneficial plants, is working largely for the best interests of man; however, when destroying small reptiles, amphibians, wild birds, poultry, corn, and some other crops, when molesting livestock and distributing their diseases, and when spreading seeds of noxious plants, the bird is one of the farmer's enemies; and when destroying spiders and mollusks, its work appears in the main to have a neutral effect. The misdeeds of which the crow has been convicted greatly outnumber its virtues, but these are not necessarily equal in importance. Much of its damage to crops and poultry can be prevented, while the bird's services in the control of insect pests can ill be spared. At the same time no policy can be recommended that will allow the crow to become so numerous as to greatly accentuate its shortcomings. The crow has such great capacity for both good and harm that extermination of the species would have ultimate consequences no less serious than its overabundance.

Inasmuch as this investigation of the crow and its habits aimed at reaching general conclusions respecting the status of the bird, in order that the public attitude toward it might be based on sound economic principles, biologists of the department state that the laws at present in force in most States relating to the crow are altogether satisfactory. It is well, they say, that no protection be afforded the bird and that the way be left open for shooting it when actually doing damage. Bounties are not recommended, neither are campaigns of wholesale destruction where complete extermination is the object sought. A reasonable reduction of its numbers is considered justifiable, however, in areas where the crow is overabundant, and where the evidence of its destructive practices is clear.

The Biological Survey urges that the attitude of the individual farmer toward the crow be one of toleration when no serious losses are suffered, rather than one of such uncompromising antagonism that it results in the unwarranted destruction of birds that at times are most valuable aids to man.